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Lucie Chevrier, Alexandre De Brevern, Eva Hernandez, Jérôme Leprince,  
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1 **PRR repeats in the intracellular domain of KISS1R are important for its export to cell**  
2 **membrane**

3 *Running title: PRR repeats in intracellular domain of KISS1R*

4 Lucie Chevrier<sup>1</sup>, Alexandre de Brevern<sup>2</sup>, Eva Hernandez<sup>1</sup>, Jérôme Leprince<sup>3</sup>, Hubert Vaudry<sup>3</sup>, Anne  
5 Marie Guedj<sup>4</sup>, Nicolas de Roux<sup>1,5</sup>.

6

<sup>1</sup> INSERM UMR676, Univ Paris Diderot, Sorbonne Paris Cité, F-75739 Paris, France

7 <sup>2</sup> INSERM UMR-S 665; Univ Paris Diderot; Sorbonne Paris Cité; INTS; Laboratoire d'Excellence  
8 GR-Ex, 75015 Paris, France.

9 <sup>3</sup> INSERM UMR982, Univ Rouen, Mont-Saint-Aignan, France

10 <sup>4</sup> Service des Maladies Métaboliques et Endocriniennes, Hôpital Carémeau, Nîmes

11 <sup>5</sup> Laboratoire de Biochimie. Hôpital Robert Debré. 75019 Paris.

12

13 Corresponding author: Nicolas de Roux, INSERM U676, Hôpital Robert Debré, 48 Bd Sérurier,  
14 75019 Paris, France, tel.: + 33 (0)1 40 03 19 85; Fax: + 33 (0)1 40 03 19 95; E-mail:  
15 [nicolas.deroux@inserm.fr](mailto:nicolas.deroux@inserm.fr).

16

17 To whom correspondence should be addressed: Nicolas de Roux, INSERM U676, Hôpital Robert  
18 Debré, 48 Bd Sérurier, 75019 Paris, France, tel.: + 33 (0)1 40 03 19 85; Fax: + 33 (0)1 40 03 19 95;  
19 E-mail: [nicolas.deroux@inserm.fr](mailto:nicolas.deroux@inserm.fr).

20

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22

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27

28 **ABSTRACT**

29 Inactivating mutations of KISS1R have been recently described as a rare cause of isolated  
30 hypogonadotropic hypogonadism (IHH) transmitted as a recessive trait. Few mutations have been  
31 described and the structure-function relationship of KISS1R remains poorly understood. Here, we  
32 have taken advantage of the discovery of a novel mutation of KISS1R to characterize the structure  
33 and function of an uncommon protein motif composed of three proline-arginine-arginine (PRR)  
34 repeats located within the intracellular domain. A heterozygous insertion of one PRR repeat in-frame  
35 with three PRR repeats leading to synthesis of a receptor bearing 4 PRR repeats (PRR-KISS1R) was  
36 found in the index case. Functional analysis of PRR-KISS1R showed a decrease of the maximal  
37 response to kisspeptin stimulation, associated to a lower cell surface expression without modification  
38 of total expression. PRR-KISS1R exerts a dominant negative effect on the synthesis of the wild type  
39 KISS1R (WT-KISS1R). This effect was due to the nature of inserted residues, but also to the  
40 difference of the length of the intracellular domain between PRR- and WT-KISS1R. A molecular  
41 dynamic analysis showed that the additional PRR constrained this arginine rich region into a  
42 polyProline type II helix. Altogether, this study shows that a heterozygous insertion in KISS1R may  
43 lead to IHH by a dominant negative effect on the WT receptor. An additional PRR repeat into a  
44 proline-arginine rich motif can dramatically changed the conformation of the intracellular domain of  
45 KISS1R and its probable interaction with partner proteins.

46

## 47 INTRODUCTION

48 Isolated hypogonadotropic hypogonadism (IHH) is defined by low sex steroid hormone synthesis with  
49 low LH and FSH levels. The congenital form of this condition is a rare disease. Several genes have  
50 now been linked to IHH. Some were natural candidate genes, such as those encoding for the GnRH  
51 receptor (1) or its ligand, GnRH (2). Others were characterized by genome mapping and encoded for  
52 Kisspeptins (Kp) (3) and their receptor (KISS1R) (4, 5) or Neurokinin B (NKB) and its receptor  
53 (TACR3) (6). Kp and NKB are both neuropeptides expressed in hypothalamic neurons as well as their  
54 receptors. They belong to a complex neuroendocrine network aiming to control synthesis and  
55 secretion of GnRH. They are major determinants of the gonadotropic axis reactivation leading to  
56 pubertal onset (7). They also relay the estradiol positive- and negative-feedback on the gonadotropic  
57 axis leading to the LH ovulatory peak (8, 9).

58 KISS1R is a G-protein coupled receptor (GPCR) expressed in GnRH neurons (9). Kp activates  
59 phospholipase C beta and MAPK signaling pathways and depolarize GnRH neurons by activating  
60 nonselective TRPC cation channels and by inhibiting inwardly rectifying potassium channels (9).

61 To date, 11 mutations in *KISS1R* have been identified in IHH (4, 5, 10-15). IHH due to KISS1R  
62 mutations is transmitted as a recessive trait although late puberty has been reported in heterozygous  
63 parents of at least one index case (4). Compound heterozygous mutations (5, 12) or homozygous  
64 mutations have been reported (4, 5, 10, 11, 14, 15). However, there are no striking genotype-  
65 phenotype correlations for KISS1R mutations. Complete loss-of-function mutations do not necessarily  
66 cause complete gonadotropic deficiency and variable phenotypes could be observed in patients  
67 carrying the same KISS1R mutation (4, 14). Similar reproductive phenotype variability was also  
68 reported in *Kiss1*-deleted mouse mode (16, 17). In very few cases, one heterozygous mutation in  
69 *KISS1R* was shown to be associated with a mutation in other IHH genes (18).

70 In the present study, we identified a heterozygous variant in *KISS1R* in one patient harboring IHH.  
71 This variant is characterized by the addition of one proline and two arginines (PRR) in the  
72 intracellular domain of the receptor. The absence of a second event on the other allele, the normal  
73 coding sequence in other IHH genes, and the uncommon location of the insertion in the intracellular  
74 domain of KISS1R led us to suspect that the mutated receptor may have a dominant negative effect on

75 the WT KISS1R. Moreover, this PRR repeat motif seemed unique in mammals and its biochemical  
76 function, if any, was unknown. We have therefore analyzed the functional effects of the PRR insertion  
77 in the intracellular domain of KISS1R and modeled the structural consequence of this insertion.  
78 Functional results were then correlated with the phenotype.

79

## 80 **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

81 *Patient.* The proband was a 16-year-old boy who was referred for impuberism and obesity. He was  
82 born at term and there was no history of cryptorchidism. At the initial presentation, he was Tanner  
83 stage 1. The BMI was 31 kg/m<sup>2</sup>. His penis length was 5 cm, and right and left testicular volumes were  
84 3 ml. There was no anosmia. The born age was 13 yrs. He reported episodic nocturnal enuresis.  
85 Laboratory investigations revealed low plasma testosterone levels (1 nmol/L) with low LH (2.9 IU/L)  
86 and low FSH (5.3 IU/L) levels. The other endocrine axes were normal. The family history revealed  
87 obesity in the mother and the sister and a fertility problem in the father, but it was not possible to  
88 obtain further details.

89

90 *Mutation analyses.* The sequencing of *KISS1R* exons have been performed from DNA extracted from  
91 blood lymphocytes as previously described (4). Briefly, the five exons of *KISS1R* were amplified by  
92 PCR, and the PCR products were sequenced with BigDye dideoxyterminator cycle sequencing kit and  
93 the 3100 sequencer (Applied Biosystems) with the same primers. Both parents gave informed consent  
94 for genetic analysis of the proband's DNA but after the characterization of the mutation in the  
95 proband, they did not agree to determine whether the mutation was de-novo or was transmitted by one  
96 of them or to the proband's sister.

97

98 *Cell culture.* HEK-293, Cos-7 and HeLa cells were cultured in high glucose (4,500 mg/liter) DMEM  
99 with GlutaMAX™ I (Invitrogen, Cergy Pontoise, France), supplemented with 10% FCS, 100 U/ml  
100 penicillin and 100 µg/ml streptomycin (Invitrogen), and 25 mM HEPES. Cells were incubated in a  
101 humidified 95% air, 5% CO<sub>2</sub> controlled atmosphere at 37°C. Medium was changed every 3 or 4 days.  
102 Passages were performed once per week, using 1X trypsin/EDTA (Invitrogen).

103 *Construction of the expression vectors.* The PRR insertion was introduced by PCR into the wild type  
104 *KISS1R* sequence cloned in a pcDNA3.1 expression vector (WT-KISS1R) (Table 1) as described  
105 elsewhere (14). Briefly, the mutation was reproduced by PCR, then the PCR fragment was cut by the  
106 restriction enzymes Sbf1 and Ppu1 (New England Biolabs, Evry, France) and was subcloned into a  
107 *KISS1R*-expressing vector in place of the WT sequence. The resulting vector was called PRR-  
108 *KISS1R*. To study cell surface expression of *KISS1R*, a HA epitope (YPYDVPDYA) was added at  
109 the N-terminal end of *KISS1R* after the initial methionine (11). The resulting plasmid was called WT-  
110 HA-KISS1R. The vector expressing a HA-tagged PRR mutated *KISS1R* (PRR-HA-KISS1R) was  
111 constructed by exchanging a HindIII-BsrGI fragment from PRR-KISS1R into WT-HA-KISS1R.  
112 For the construction of (AAA)<sub>4</sub>-, AAA(PRR)<sub>3</sub>- and (PRR)<sub>3</sub>AAA-KISS1R expressing vectors, in  
113 which the 4 PRR repeats were replaced respectively by AAAAAAAAAA, AAAPRRPRRPRR and  
114 PRRPRRPRRAAA, a fragment with Sbf1, BamH1 and KpnI, HindIII restriction sites were  
115 synthesized, and inserted in pUC57 cloning vector between KpnI and HindIII restriction sites  
116 (Eurogentec, Angers, France). Next, fragments of interest were cut by the restriction enzymes Sbf1  
117 and BamH1 (New England Biolabs) and were subcloned into *KISS1R*- or HA-KISS1R-expressing  
118 vectors in place of the WT sequence.  
119 To construct the vector expressing a *KISS1R* without the PRR repeats, ΔPRR-HA-KISS1R or ΔPRR-  
120 *KISS1R*, a Sbf1-BamH1 fragment containing a SfaA1 restriction site was amplified by PCR from the  
121 WT receptor and subcloned into HA-KISS1R- or *KISS1R*-expressing vector at Sbf1 and BamH1  
122 sites. This plasmid was cut by SfaA1, incubated with T4 DNA polymerase (New England Biolabs) to  
123 remove the 3' cohesive extremity and generate blunted extremities, and then incubated with T4 DNA  
124 ligase (New England Biolabs) to obtain ΔPRR-HA-KISS1R and ΔPRR-KISS1R plasmids.  
125 Plasmid constructs were validated by direct sequencing of the inserted fragments and by restriction-  
126 enzyme mapping.  
127  
128 *Transfection.* HEK-293, Cos-7 and HeLa cells were seeded in 35-mm dish. Twenty-four hours after  
129 plating, cells were transfected with expression vectors using FuGENE HD (Roche Diagnostics,

130 Meylan, France) or using the calcium phosphate transfection kit (Invitrogen) according to the  
131 manufacturer's instructions.

132

133 *Inositol phosphate (IP) measurements.* Twenty-four hours post-transfection, cells were seeded in 96-  
134 well plates at a density of 20,000 cells/well. After 24 h (48 h post-transfection), total IP was measured  
135 using the IP-One HTRF® Assay kit (Cisbio Bioassays, Bagnols-sur-Cèze, France) according to the  
136 manufacturer's instructions. Briefly, cells were stimulated with Kp10 during 1 h at 37°C. After  
137 stimulation, the fluorophore d2-labeled IP1 and anti-IP1 antibody conjugated to cryptate (IP-one Tb)  
138 were added for 1 h at room temperature, and the plate was read at 620 nm and 665 nm using  
139 PARADIGM™ Detection Platform (Beckman Coulter, Brea, CA). Each functional analysis was  
140 performed in triplicates.

141

142 *MAPK activation.* Twenty-four hours after transfection, HeLa cells were serum-starved for 18 h. Cells  
143 were treated with Kp10 at  $10^{-5}$  M in DMEM supplemented with 0.2% BSA during 10 min. Total  
144 proteins were extracted with "Cell Lysis Buffer" (Cell Signaling, Danvers, MA) according to the  
145 manufacturer's instructions. Thirty µg of proteins were resolved in 10% SDS-PAGE and  
146 electroblotted for 1 h at 100 V, onto Hybon-P membranes (GE Healthcare, Velizy, France).  
147 Membranes were blocked 3 h at room temperature, by using 5% non-fat milk in TBS containing 0.1%  
148 Tween 20 (TBST) and incubated overnight at 4°C with a mouse monoclonal anti-phospho-  
149 p44/42MAPK antibody (Cell Signaling) diluted in blocking solution. Membranes were washed 3 x 10  
150 min at room temperature in TBST, incubated for 1 h with a peroxidase-conjugated Fab specific Goat  
151 anti-Mouse IgG (Sigma-Aldrich, Saint-Quentin Fallavier, France) in blocking solution, and washed  
152 again with TBST. Bound antibodies were revealed by chemiluminescence with the Immun-Star™  
153 WesternC™ Chemiluminescent Kit (Biorad, Marné-la-Coquette, France) using ChemiDoc™ XRS  
154 (Biorad). After stripping of bound antibodies, membranes were probed again with a monoclonal  
155 mouse anti-p44/42MAPK antibody (Cell Signaling) according to the same procedure.

156

157 *KISS1R quantification by ELISA.* Twenty-four hours post-transfection, cells were seeded in 96-well  
158 plates at a density of 30,000 cells/well. Twenty-four hours later, cells were washed with PBS, fixed  
159 with 2% paraformaldehyde (PFA) for 10 min at room temperature. To quantify the total cellular  
160 expression of KISS1R, cells were permeabilized with 0.2% Triton X-100 (Sigma-Aldrich) for 10 min,  
161 washed and then blocked with PBS supplemented with 2% BSA (Sigma-Aldrich). Cells were  
162 incubated with the monoclonal rat anti-HA antibody 3F10 (Roche Diagnostics) at 0.5  $\mu\text{g/ml}$  in PBS  
163 supplemented with 1% BSA for 1 h at room temperature. After three washes with PBS, cells were  
164 incubated with a goat anti-rat antibody coupled to horseradish peroxidase (Jackson Immuno-Research,  
165 Suffolk, England) at 0.2  $\mu\text{g/ml}$  in PBS-1% BSA. Signal was detected and quantified with “BM  
166 Chemiluminescence ELISA Substrate POD” (Roche Diagnostics) using Paradigm counter (Beckman  
167 coulter). For cell surface quantification, the protocol was the same, with the exception that cells were  
168 not permeabilized. Each analysis was performed in triplicates.

169  
170 *Molecular dynamics of WT-KISS1R and PRR-KISS1R fragment.* Protein structure fragments  
171 encompassing PRR repetitions of WT-KISS1R and PRR-KISS1R have been analyzed through  
172 molecular dynamics approach. A detailed description of the method may be found in the  
173 supplementary data. Fragments were of 24-residue length for the WT sequence and 27-residue length  
174 for the PRR sequence and were respectively named (PRR)<sub>3</sub> and (PRR)<sub>4</sub>. Five structural models for  
175 (PRR)<sub>3</sub> and five for (PRR)<sub>4</sub> were built using I-Tasser webserver (19). In addition, each model was  
176 constrained to add PolyProline II (PPII) helix conformation (20), leading to 20 independent structural  
177 models (10 for (PRR)<sub>3</sub> and 10 for (PRR)<sub>4</sub>). Molecular dynamics simulations were performed with  
178 GROMACS 4.0.5 software (21) for each protein fragment. The structural models were also analyzed  
179 using secondary structure assigned with DSSP software (22) and a refined approach named Protein  
180 Blocks (PBs) analysis (23). This latter approach allowed a precise comparative analysis of  
181 conformations of (PRR)<sub>3</sub> and (PRR)<sub>4</sub> (24). It was also used to compute the entropy termed  $N_{\text{eq}}$ , which  
182 quantifies the stability of local protein conformations.

183  
184 *Statistical analysis.* Data were analyzed using GraphPad Prism Software (GraphPad, San Diego, CA)



185 by one-way ANOVA with a Bonferroni test if number of groups was superior to 2 (Figure 2B, 4, 6B,  
186 7) or by a two tails Student's t-test when 2 groups were compared (Figure 3). Differences were  
187 considered significant when  $p < 0.05$ . For IPs measurements and MAPK activation, results are  
188 expressed as percentage of maximal stimulation of WT-KISS1R, which was set at 100%. In all figures  
189 reporting KISS1R quantification, the expression of mutated receptors was expressed as percentage of  
190 WT-KISS1R expression.

191

## 192 **RESULTS**

193 *Sequencing analysis.* Sequencing of the coding exons of *KISS1R* revealed a heterozygous in-frame  
194 insertion of 9 nucleotides at position 1023 (c.1023Ins9) (Figure 1A). The c.1023Ins9 allele encoded  
195 for a KISS1R with an additional PRR repeat in a proline-arginine-rich region of the intracellular  
196 domain at residue 342. It led to the synthesis of a receptor with 4 consecutive PRR repeats instead of  
197 3 (Figure 1B). This mutant receptor was called “PRR-KISS1R”. The DNA of the parents and the  
198 sister of the proband were not available for analysis.

199

200 *Functional analyses.* To study the effect of the PRR insertion on KISS1R function, a PRR-KISS1R  
201 encoding plasmid was transiently transfected in HeLa cells and Kp10-induced generation of  
202 intracellular IP was quantified. Forty-eight hours after transfection, no Kp10-induced increase in IP  
203 was observed in control cells transfected with the empty vector. In cells transiently expressing WT-  
204 HA-KISS1R, Kp10 increased intracellular IPs (Figure 2A). In PRR-HA-KISS1R-expressing cells,  
205 Kp10 also induced an intracellular increase of IPs (Figure 2A). However, the maximal effect of Kp10  
206 stimulation was lowered by  $46 \pm 1\%$  in PRR-HA-KISS1R-expressing cells as compared to WT-HA-  
207 KISS1R-expressing cells. Moreover, the EC50 in PRR-HA-KISS1R-expressing cells was slightly  
208 increased by 1.8 fold ( $9.8 \pm 1.0 \times 10^{-7}$  M for PRR-HA-KISS1R vs  $5.3 \pm 1.3 \times 10^{-7}$  M for WT-HA-  
209 KISS1R). To ensure that the HA-tag did not modify the activity of the receptors, Kp10-induced  
210 generation of IP in tagged and untagged WT-KISS1R and PRR-KISS1R transiently transfected cells  
211 were compared. Similar Kp10-induced IP increase was observed, indicating that the HA-tag did not  
212 alter KISS1R activation (data not shown).

213 Kp was known to activate the MAPK pathway (25). To study KP10-induced activation of the MAPK  
214 pathway, WT-HA-KISS1R and PRR-HA-KISS1R transiently transfected HeLa cells were incubated  
215 with  $10^{-5}$ M of Kp10 for 10 min. Total proteins were extracted, immunoblotted with anti-phospho-  
216 MAPK antibody (P-MAPK) and then with anti-MAPK antibody. Kp-induced MAPK phosphorylation  
217 was significantly lower in PRR-HA-KISS1R-expressing cells than in WT-HA-KISS1R-expressing  
218 cells (Figure 2B). To verify that the difference observed between WT and PRR-KISS1R was not cell-  
219 type specific, we reproduced these functional analyses in HEK293 and Cos-7 cell lines. Data  
220 confirmed that the maximal Kp10-stimulation of intracellular IP accumulation and of the MAPK  
221 pathway was significantly lower in PRR-HA-KISS1R-expressing cells than in WT-HA-KISS1R-  
222 expressing cells (data not shown).

223

224 *Cell surface quantification by ELISA.* Functional analyses showed that the PRR insertion impaired the  
225 activation of the receptor and the maximal stimulation of KISS1R by Kp10. The difference between  
226 WT-KISS1R and PRR-KISS1R could thus be due to a lower amount of PRR-KISS1R expressed at the  
227 cell surface. To analyze cell surface expression of PRR-HA-KISS1R, the HA-tag was quantified by  
228 ELISA in non-permeabilized (cell surface expression) and in permeabilized (total expression)  
229 transiently transfected HeLa cells. Cell surface expression of PRR-HA-KISS1R was significantly  
230 decreased by 2-fold compared to WT-HA-KISS1R (Figure 3A). Total expression did not significantly  
231 change between PRR-HA-KISS1R and WT-HA-KISS1R (Figure 3B). These results indicate that the  
232 additional PRR impaired the intracellular trafficking of KISS1R. We also tested the effect of the PRR  
233 insertion on the internalization of KISS1R. In HEK293 cells, the PRR insertion did not modify the  
234 constitutive internalization of KISS1R as well as Kp10-induced internalization (data not shown).

235

236 *Effect of PRR-KISS1R on WT-HA-KISS1R expression.* As the PRR insertion was found heterozygous  
237 in the affected patient, and isolated gonadotropic deficiency due to KISS1R mutation is usually  
238 transmitted as a recessive trait, we suspected that the PRR-KISS1R could decrease the expression of  
239 the WT receptor at the cell surface and therefore act as a dominant negative receptor on WT-KISS1R.  
240 For that purpose, WT-HA-KISS1R was co-expressed in HeLa cells with untagged PRR-KISS1R by

241 transient transfection. The expression of WT-HA-KISS1R was subsequently quantified by ELISA.  
242 The co-expression of WT-HA-KISS1R with PRR-KISS1R in HeLa cells resulted in a reduced amount  
243 of WT-HA-KISS1R at the cell surface (Figure 4A). This reduction was significantly different with  
244 two fold more of untagged PRR-KISS1R than WT-HA-KISS1R alone. Cell surface expression of  
245 PRR-HA-KISS1R co-expressed with increasing amounts of untagged PRR receptor was also  
246 quantified. Co-expression of PRR-HA-KISS1R with PRR-KISS1R only slightly reduced its cell  
247 surface expression (Figure 4A). The total expression of WT-HA-KISS1R co-transfected with two fold  
248 more PRR-KISS1R was significantly reduced by 2-fold (Figure 4B), whereas the total expression of  
249 PRR-HA-KISS1R was only slightly perturbed by the increasing amount of co-transfected PRR-  
250 KISS1R. The ratio of the cell surface expression to the total expression of the WT-KISS1R was  
251 therefore not modified by the co-transfection with PRR-KISS1R (Figure 4C). In addition to have an  
252 altered intracellular trafficking, PRR-KISS1R also disturbed the total expression of WT-KISS1R.

253

254 *Molecular dynamics.* To understand the impact of the additional PRR in the conformation of the  
255 intracellular domain, we analyzed the protein dynamics using classical approaches (26). No structure  
256 was available in the Protein Databank (27) and no related proteins with available structure can be  
257 found. We have thus focused the analysis on protein fragments encompassing the PRR repeats, *i.e.*, a  
258 fragment of 24 residues for WT-KISS1R ((PRR)<sub>3</sub>) and 27 residues for PRR-KISS1R ((PRR)<sub>4</sub>) (Figure  
259 S1A). No available structure or homologue was found for this sequence. Secondary structure  
260 prediction methods (*e.g.*, PSI-PRED (28)) predicted coil with a poor accuracy but also a flexible  
261 region (data not shown) (29).

262 I-Tasser webserver (30) was used to propose structural models for both fragments. According to the I-  
263 Tasser's C-scores, the best 5 structural models for (PRR)<sub>3</sub> and for (PRR)<sub>4</sub> have been conserved. As the  
264 proline rich region was often seen as a PPII helix (31), we also tested models with PRR repeats  
265 constrained as PPII helices using the Modeller software (32). The structural models with the lowest  
266 DOPE score were selected. Hence, each protein fragment was represented by 5 *free* structural models,  
267 *i.e.*, without PPII helices, and 5 constrained structural models, *i.e.*, with PPII helices. A first analysis

268 in terms of secondary content showed that 95% of the structure corresponded to a coil state according  
269 to DSSP assignment.

270 A molecular dynamic analysis was performed for the 20 different structural models for at least 50 ns.  
271 As expected, the two protein fragments were highly dynamic. The first visual analysis showed a  
272 compaction of the WT fragment. To quantify this compaction, distances between the extremities of  
273 (PRR)<sub>3</sub> or (PRR)<sub>4</sub> were computed. At first, all structural models of (PRR)<sub>3</sub> (*free* and PPII *constrained*)  
274 showed both a rapid and irreversible decrease in the distance between extremities (Figure 5A). On  
275 average, the distance was 5 Å. In contrast, (PRR)<sub>4</sub> structural models (*free* and PPII *constrained*)  
276 showed a higher distance between extremities that remained around 20 Å.

277 To analyze the conformations of the peptide more in-depth, a structural alphabet was used (33), *i.e.*, a  
278 set of small local protein structures that can be used to approximate every part of a protein structure.  
279 The structural alphabet used for this analysis, namely Protein Blocks (PBs) (23, 24), is composed of  
280 16 distinct prototypes that are 5 residues in length. The analysis of (PRR)<sub>3</sub> by the structural alphabet  
281 revealed four consecutive regions (R1 to R4) (Figure 5B, left panel). R1 was highly fuzzy, mainly  
282 associated to helical PBs (PBs *m* is the core of helix). R2 was associated to PBs related to beta-strands  
283 (PBs *b* to *d*). R3 was less fuzzy, but not associated to beta conformations, only two residues preferred  
284 PBs *c* while most of the others were more associated to turns (succession of PBs *fl* and *d*). R4 was  
285 fuzzier than R3 with tendencies to beta-strands PBs. The analysis of (PRR)<sub>4</sub> by the structural alphabet  
286 showed a strong preference for the PBs *d* (Figure 5B, right panel). Both R1 and R2 were in beta  
287 conformation, but not beta-sheets. The adjunction of one PRR repeat showed a striking constraint of  
288 R3 with only PBs *d* for the last PRR repeat. It was the core of the PPII helix. R4 showed an accented  
289 transition (PBs *fbe/gc*).

290 To quantify constraints, the PB distribution was transformed in a quantitative value ( $N_{eq}$ ). If only one  
291 PB was observed for a residue,  $N_{eq}$  equals to 1; if all PBs were predicted with the same probability,  
292  $N_{eq}$  equals to 16. At the N-terminus of the analyzed sequences (R1 and R2),  $N_{eq}$  were lower for (PRR)<sub>4</sub>  
293 fragment than for (PRR)<sub>3</sub> (Figure 5C). Then,  $N_{eq}$  were roughly comparable for the two first PRR  
294 repeats. The addition of one repeat induced a high constraint with a  $N_{eq}$  close to 1. The C-terminus of  
295 both sequences had higher  $N_{eq}$ , but again  $N_{eq}$  was lower for (PRR)<sub>4</sub> than for (PRR)<sub>3</sub>.

296 From these results, it should be noted that (PRR)<sub>3</sub> was highly flexible and did not possess a PPII helix,  
297 having only few positions that were stable, which were comparable to turns. The adjunction of an  
298 extra PRR repeat created a strong rigidity of the peptide, with conformation into a PPII helix. The  
299 content of PPII helix of structural models of (PRR)<sub>3</sub> (*free* and *PPII constrained*) was very limited (less  
300 than 3%), while the PPII helix content of (PRR)<sub>4</sub> structural models (*free* and *PPII constrained*) was  
301 always high and especially for the last PRR repetition (more than 85%).

302

303 *Implication of the proline and arginine-rich domain in KISS1R expression.* To study how the PRR  
304 insertion interferes with the normal function of KISS1R, mutants of the PRR repeat were constructed  
305 (Table 1). We tested the nature of the inserted residues as well as the position of the insertion of the  
306 triplet in regards to the normal PRR repeat. Substitution of the PRR insertion by AAA at the N-  
307 terminal of the PRR repeat (AAA(PRR)<sub>3</sub>) slightly increased the EC<sub>50</sub> by 1.2 fold ( $1.5 \pm 1.1 \times 10^{-7}$  M  
308 for WT-HA vs  $1.9 \pm 1.0 \times 10^{-7}$  M for AAA(PRR)<sub>3</sub>) and decreased maximal stimulation by 30% (Figure  
309 6A). This maximal decrease of IP generation was associated with a decrease of the total and cell  
310 surface expression (Figure 6B). Interestingly, addition of an AAA at the C-terminal end of the PRR  
311 repeat ((PRR)<sub>3</sub>AAA) did not change the EC<sub>50</sub> value nor the maximal stimulation of the mutant  
312 receptor (Figure 6A). A slight decrease of cell surface and total expression was observed for  
313 (PRR)<sub>3</sub>AAA-KISS1R when compared to WT-KISS1R (Figure 6B). To definitively affirm the  
314 functional importance of the PRR repeats, the 4 PRR repeats were substituted by alanines ((AAA)<sub>4</sub>) or  
315 deleted ( $\Delta$ PRR; only the last arginine was conserved). The absence of PRR repeats by deletion or  
316 AAA substitution induced an increase of the EC<sub>50</sub> ( $1.5 \pm 1.1 \times 10^{-7}$  M for WT-HA vs  $8.2 \pm 0.8 \times 10^{-7}$  M  
317 for (AAA)<sub>4</sub> and  $1.1 \pm 0.8 \times 10^{-6}$  M for  $\Delta$ PRR) and a decrease of the maximal stimulation. Overall, ratios  
318 of cell surface expression/total expression of these mutated receptors were not changed (Figure 6B).  
319 The dominant negative effect of each mutant on WT-KISS1R expression was then tested by co-  
320 expression in HeLa cells. (AAA)<sub>4</sub>, AAA(PRR)<sub>3</sub> and  $\Delta$ PRR-KISS1R decreased the total expression of  
321 WT-HA-KISS1R ( $64 \pm 16\%$ ,  $72 \pm 16\%$  and  $69 \pm 10\%$  of the total expression in absence of the  
322 mutated receptors respectively) (Figure 7). Cell surface expression of WT-HA-KISS1R also

323 decreased in similar proportions ( $60 \pm 2\%$ ,  $64 \pm 5\%$ , and  $48 \pm 3\%$  for WT-HA + (AAA)<sub>4</sub>, WT-HA +  
324 AAA(PRR)<sub>3</sub>, WT-HA +  $\Delta$ PRR respectively). The relative expression at the cell surface to the total  
325 expression was therefore not changed by the co-expression of a mutated receptor (Figure 7). It is  
326 important to note, (PRR)<sub>3</sub>AAA-KISS1R had no significant effect on neither total nor cell surface  
327 expression of WT-HA-KISS1R.

328

## 329 **DISCUSSION**

330 Natural inactivating mutations of GPCR have long been considered as a cause of endocrine diseases  
331 (LHR, TSHR, FSHR, GnRH, GHRH, MC4R, MC2R, MC3R, CaR, PTHR1, KISS1R), retinis  
332 pigmentosa (Rhodopsin), nephrogenic diabetes insipidus (V2R) and Hirschsprung disease (ET<sub>B</sub>R).  
333 They were also associated to susceptibility to HIV infection (CCR5), determination of skin and hair  
334 colors (MC3R) or increased susceptibility to melanoma (MC1R) (34, 35). Most of these diseases or  
335 physiological traits are transmitted as a recessive trait. In few cases, a dominant transmission has been  
336 reported (34). Loss of function mutation of KISS1R leading to isolated gonadotropic deficiency has  
337 been recently described (4, 5). Few homozygous or compound heterozygous mutations have been  
338 described in patients with recessive transmission of IHH (4, 5, 10-15). In the present study, we  
339 showed that the insertion of a PRR sequence in the intracellular domain of KISS1R disturbed the  
340 normal expression of the receptor at cell surface. The KISS1R bearing the additional PRR repeat  
341 exerts a dominant negative effect on the WT receptor expression. This additional PRR within a  
342 repetition of three consecutive PRR sequence constrained this sequence into a PPII helix and  
343 increases its rigidity. Altogether, this study highlights the possible dominant transmission of IHH due  
344 to KISS1R mutations. It also underscores the importance of a proline-arginine-rich region within the  
345 intracellular domain potentially involved in the normal folding and intracellular signaling pathways of  
346 KISS1R.

347 IHH due to KISS1R mutations is transmitted as a recessive trait (4, 5, 10-15). Several KISS1R-  
348 mutated cases have now been described. However, the understanding of the genotype-phenotype  
349 correlation of KISS1R mutations is not obvious, which underscores the complexity of the regulation  
350 of the gonadotropic axis by Kp. For instance, the complete inactivation of KISS1R may lead to a

351 severe gonadotropic deficiency with complete absence of pubertal onset (11). Similar dramatic  
352 inactivation of KISS1R may be associated to partial phenotype with incomplete pubertal progression  
353 (4, 5, 14). In one case, a pubertal delay was reported in one heterozygous parent (4). The  
354 neuroendocrine re-activation of the gonadotropic axis is progressive, starting before the appearance of  
355 the clinical signs of puberty (36, 37). This re-activation is related to the increase of Kp synthesis but  
356 also to the capacity of KISS1R to be activated by Kp (38). As the PRR insertion reduced cell surface  
357 expression of the mutant KISS1R but also the expression of WT-KISS1R by a dominant negative  
358 effect, we propose that the IHH phenotype observed in this patient is attributable to the PRR insertion.  
359 Such dominant negative effect of natural GPCR mutants on the WT receptor has already been  
360 described in TSHR, MC4R, CaR, CCR5 (34).

361 The repetition of 3 PRR is unique to the human KISS1R. However, this part of the intracellular  
362 domain is arginine-rich in other species (Figure 8). The arginine-rich motif RXR is considered as the  
363 core motif of endoplasmic reticulum (ER)-exit or ER-retention signals (39). Natural mutations of the  
364 RXR motif favored cell surface localization of CaR, which suggests that it may constitute an ER-  
365 retention signals for this receptor (40). Initially, we suspected that the additional PRR repeat might  
366 lead to the formation of an additional RXR motif leading to an ER-retention of the mutant receptor.  
367 Our in vitro mutagenesis of the PRR region did not support this hypothesis. Deletion of the complete  
368 PRR repetition did not lead to a higher cell surface expression of KISS1R. This arginine-rich region  
369 of the intracellular domain thus does not function as a retention signal in KISS1R.

370 It is now well known that during GPCR biosynthesis, dimer formation is required to pass quality  
371 control checkpoints in the ER (41). The role of GPCR dimerization in the ER quality control is  
372 complex. In some instances, the heterodimerization is required for a normal expression, whereas in  
373 other situations, heterodimerization between GPCR is deleterious. The latter has been well described  
374 for several mutated GPCRs, which generate asymmetric structures with their WT receptor and are  
375 then recognized as misfolded proteins and degraded (42). The co-expression of WT-HA-KISS1R with  
376 mutant receptors highly supports that the dimer symmetry is important for KISS1R to pass the ER  
377 quality control. Our results also show that the dominant negative effect of PRR-KISS1R on WT-  
378 KISS1R was observed for a mutant receptor bearing four alanine triplets in place of PRR repeats. The

379 dominant negative effect of PRR-KISS1R was thus not due to the presence of a RXR motif in the  
380 heterodimer, which had not been masked by the WT-KISS1R as described for the glutamate  
381 metabotropic receptor (43).

382 The lower expression at the cell surface of PRR-KISS1R homodimers without the change of the total  
383 expression suggests that PRR-KISS1R homodimers disturbed the intracellular traffic of the receptor.  
384 *In-silico* molecular dynamics indicates that the PRR insertion strongly alters the flexibility of the  
385 proline- and arginine-rich region. It underlines that WT-KISS1R proline- and arginine-rich region  
386 does not possess stable PPII conformation and is highly flexible, whereas the addition of one PRR  
387 repeat in this region forms a quite rigid sequence and a true PPII helix. We suspect that the PRR  
388 insertion could modify the interaction of the proline-arginine-rich region of KISS1R with an unknown  
389 partner protein. To date, the catalytic subunit of protein phosphatase 2A (PP2A-C) is the only protein  
390 known to physically interact with the intracellular domain of KISS1R. This interaction occurs  
391 between Arg335 and Ala358, including the PRR repetitions and seems to be involved in the anti-  
392 metastatic role of Kp (44). Additional experiments are necessary to test whether the additional PRR  
393 repeat disturbs the interaction of KISS1R with PP2A-C.

394 Surprisingly, our results showed that the PRR region is also involved in the signaling pathway of  
395 KISS1R. Indeed, the EC50 of (AAA)<sub>4</sub>-KISS1R or ΔPRR-KISS1R were both increased. The sequence  
396 alignment among species of the proline- and arginine-rich region indicates that prolines are poorly  
397 conserved (Figure 8). In contrast, the Arg344 is completely conserved but also in (PRR)<sub>3</sub>-AAA, which  
398 has the same EC50 as WT-KISS1R, suggesting that this arginine is particularly important for coupling  
399 KISS1R to Gq proteins. Additional functional analyses are needed to precisely delineate residues of  
400 this PRR region critical for the transduction pathway of KISS1R.

401 The present study provides the first description of a mutant KISS1R having a dominant negative  
402 effect on the WT receptor, ultimately causing IHH. It also highlights the functional importance of a  
403 proline- and arginine-rich region in the intracellular domain that appears to be involved in the folding  
404 of this domain. In respect with the abundance of arginine residues in the region of KISS1R, where the  
405 PRR insertion is located, with the important role of arginine-rich motifs in protein interactions, it  
406 would be particularly interesting to characterize proteins interacting with KISS1R in GnRH neurons.



407 Identification of such KISS1R protein partners could yield a better understanding of the activation of  
408 the Kp-KISS1R system at the onset of puberty.

409

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413

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549

550 **ABBREVIATIONS:**

551 NKB: neurokinin B; Kp: Kisspeptins; IHH: idiopathic hypogonadotropic hypogonadism; GPCR: G-  
552 protein coupled receptor; WT: wild type; IPs: inositol phosphate; ER: endoplasmic reticulum. PPII:  
553 polyProline II; PBs: protein blocks.

554

555 **TABLES**

556 Table 1: **Name and sequence of the proline-arginine-rich region of the different KISS1R**  
557 **construction.**

558

559 **FIGURE LEGENDS**

560 Figure 1: **KISS1R heterozygous mutation found in an IHH patient.** DNA was extracted from  
561 blood lymphocytes. The *KISS1R* exons were sequenced as explained in Materials and methods. A:  
562 Chromatograms showing double peaks after nucleotide 1023. Inserted nucleotides are indicated in  
563 bold and underlined. B: Protein sequence of KISS1R showing the three PRR repeats and the  
564 additional PRR in bold.

565

566 Figure 2: **The additional PRR disturbs the maximal Kp10-induced activation of KISS1R in**  
567 **HeLa cells.** A: IP production in WT-HA-KISS1R (black line), PRR-HA-KISS1R (gray line) and  
568 pcDNA3.1 transfected cells (dotted line) induced by 1 h incubation with Kp10. Data are shown as the  
569 mean±SEM of the two experiments, each performed in triplicates. B: MAPK pathway activation by a  
570 10-min treatment with Kp10 at  $10^{-5}$ M. The density of P-MAPK bands was quantified and normalized  
571 by the density of MAPK bands. Data are the mean of triplicates (WT-HA-KISS1R in black, PRR-HA-  
572 KISS1R in gray) (\*\*=p<0.01, \*\*\*=p<0.001).

573

574 Figure 3: **PRR-KISS1R is poorly expressed at the cell surface.** KISS1R expression was quantified  
575 by an ELISA against the HA-tag in HeLa cells transiently expressing WT-HA-KISS1R (black bars)  
576 and PRR-HA-KISS1R (gray bars). A: Cell surface expression in the absence of triton. B: Total

577 expression in triton-permeabilized cells. Data are reported as the mean±SEM of three independent  
578 experiments, each performed in triplicates (\*\*\*=p < 0.001).

579

580 **Figure 4: PRR-KISS1R exerts a dominant negative effect on the expression of WT-KISS1R.** A:  
581 Cell surface expression in the absence of triton. B: Total expression in triton-permeabilized cells. C:  
582 Ratio of cell surface expression on total expression. HeLa cells were co-transfected with 1.5µg of  
583 WT-HA-KISS1R alone or with 1 or 3µg of non-tagged PRR-KISS1R (black bars), or with 1.5µg of  
584 PRR-HA-KISS1R alone or with 1 or 3µg of non-tagged PRR-KISS1R (gray bars). ELISA was  
585 performed as previously described (see Material and Methods and legend to Figure 3). Data are  
586 reported as the mean±SEM of three independent experiments, each performed in triplicates (\*:  
587 compared to WT-HA-KISS1R expression in the absence of PRR-KISS1R, §: compared to PRR-HA-  
588 KISS1R expression alone) (\*=p<0.05, \*\*\*=p<0.001, §§=p<0.01).

589

590 **Figure 5: The additional PRR constrains the proline-arginine rich region into a PPII helix.** Two  
591 protein fragments of 24 or 27 residues were first modeled with I-Tasser. The best five structural  
592 models were selected and constrained to adopt a PPII helix conformation. Ten structural models were  
593 selected for each protein fragment. Molecular dynamic simulations were then performed with  
594 GROMACS software as described in supplementary methods. A: Distances between extremities of  
595 both protein fragments were measured (hatched line) during 50 ns. B: PBs analysis of both fragments  
596 ((PRR)<sub>3</sub> in the left panel and (PRR)<sub>4</sub> in the right panel). *a* to *p* correspond to 16 local prototypes (see  
597 supplementary methods) with PB *d* corresponds to a PPII helix. Color ranges indicated the probability  
598 to adopt a local conformation (dark blue, *i.e.*, 0 %, to red, *i.e.*, 100%). C: *Neq* for each residue in  
599 (PRR)<sub>3</sub> (red line) and in (PRR)<sub>4</sub> (blue line).

600

601 **Figure 6: The dominant negative effect of the additional PRR is not due to the biochemical**  
602 **nature of inserted residues.** A: Kp10-induced IP production in HeLa cells transiently expressing  
603 (AAA)<sub>4</sub>, AAA(PRR)<sub>3</sub>, (PRR)<sub>3</sub>AAA, and ΔPRR mutated KISS1R. Data represent two experiments,  
604 performed in triplicates. B: Quantification of cell surface and total expression of mutated KISS1R and

605 ratio of cell surface expression on total expression. Data are reported as the mean±SEM of two  
606 experiments performed in triplicates (\*\*=p<0.01, \*\*\*=p<0.001).

607

608 **Figure 7: Ala-KISS1R-mutants exert a dominant negative effect on the WT-KISS1R cell surface**  
609 **expression except the (PRR)<sub>3</sub>AAA mutant.** HeLa cells were transfected with 1.5µg of HA-KISS1R,  
610 and 1.5µg of non-tagged KISS1R mutants. ELISA was performed as previously described. Data are  
611 reported as the mean±SEM of two experiments performed in triplicates (\*=p<0.5, \*\*=p<0.01).

612

613 **Figure 8: The alignment of sequence of the PRR-repeat region indicates that Arg344 and Arg346**  
614 **(in bold) are conserved among species and in mutant receptors.**

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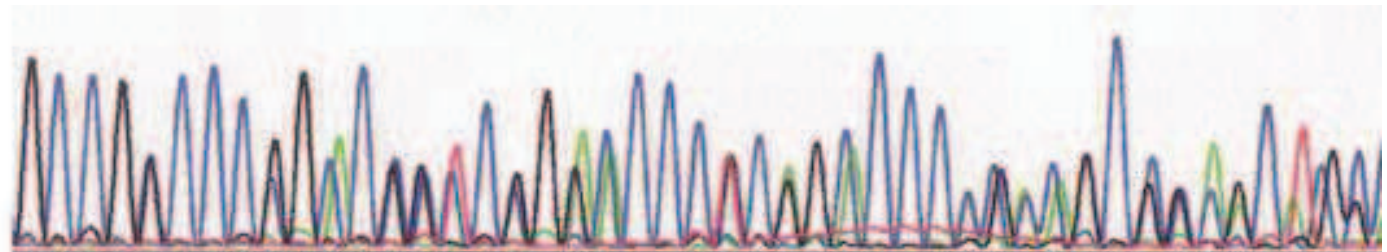
632

KISS1R plasmide	Amino acid sequence of interest
WT	PRR PRR PRR
(PRR) <sub>4</sub>	PRR PRR PRR PRR
(AAA) <sub>4</sub>	AAA AAA AAA AAA
AAA(PRR) <sub>3</sub>	AAA PRR PRR PRR
(PRR) <sub>3</sub> AAA	PRR PRR PRR AAA
ΔPRR	-

Figure 1

[Click here to download high resolution image](#)

**A**



<i>WT-KISS1R</i>	1016	GCCGGCCCGGACCCTCGGACCCCGCAGCCCCACACGCGGAGCTGC
<i>PRR-KISS1R</i>	1016	GCCGGCCC <u>CGCCGGCCC</u> GGACCCTCGGACCCCGCAGCCCCACACG

**B**

<i>WT-KISS1R</i>	331	VCPCAPRRPRRPRR---	PGPSDAA	358	
<i>PRR-KISS1R</i>	331	VCPCAPRRPRRPRR	<u>PRR</u>	PGPSDAA	361



Figure 2  
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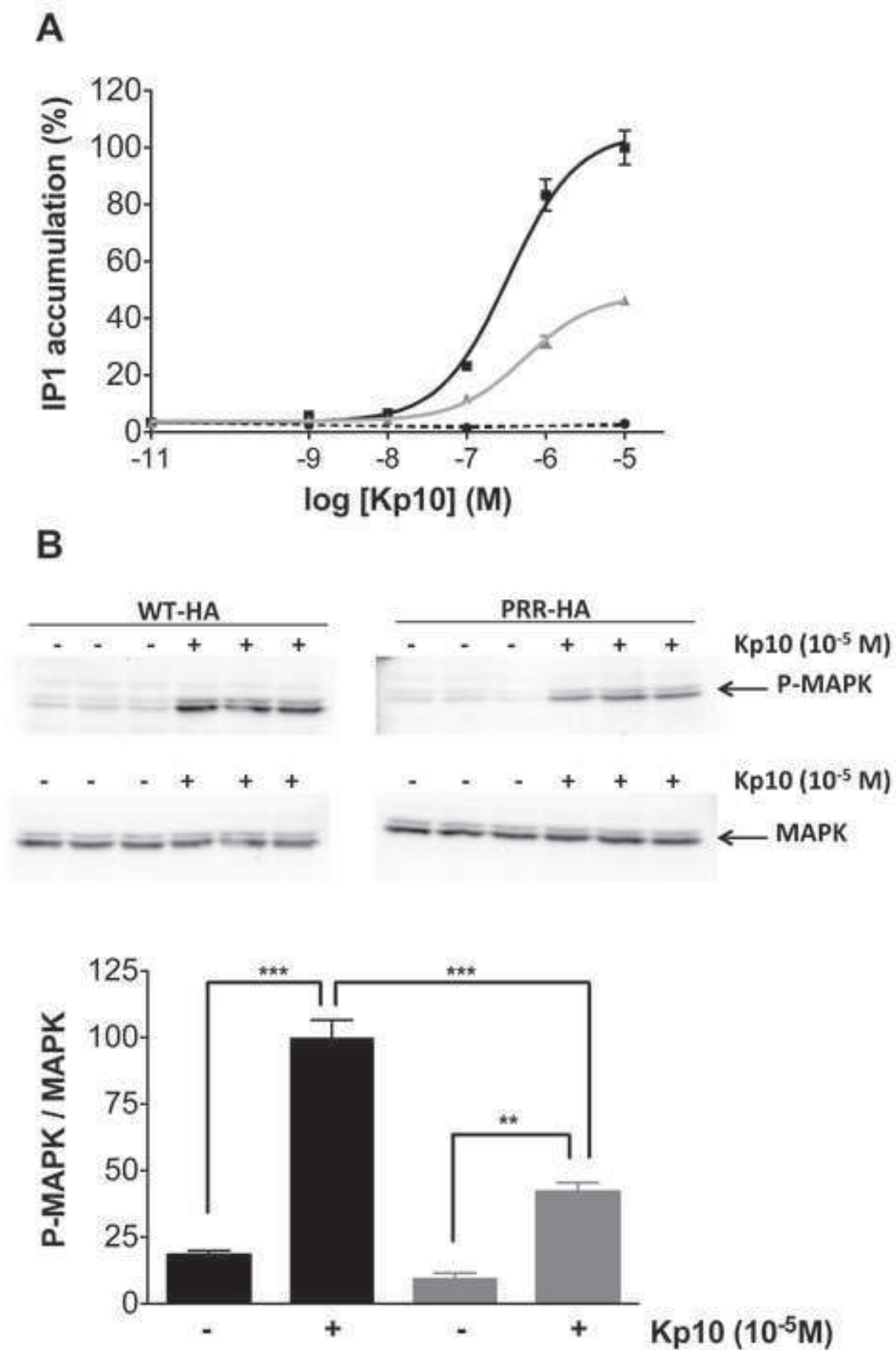


Figure 3  
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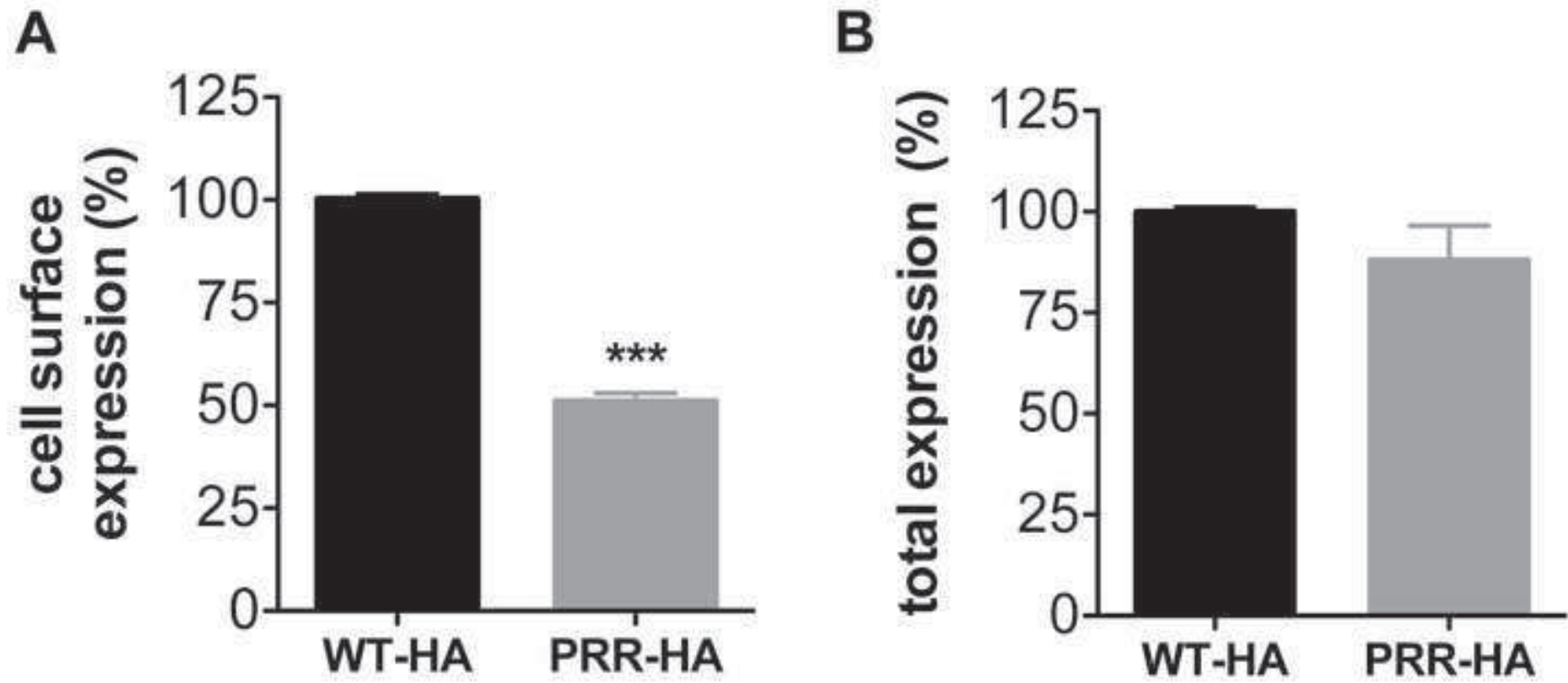


Figure 4  
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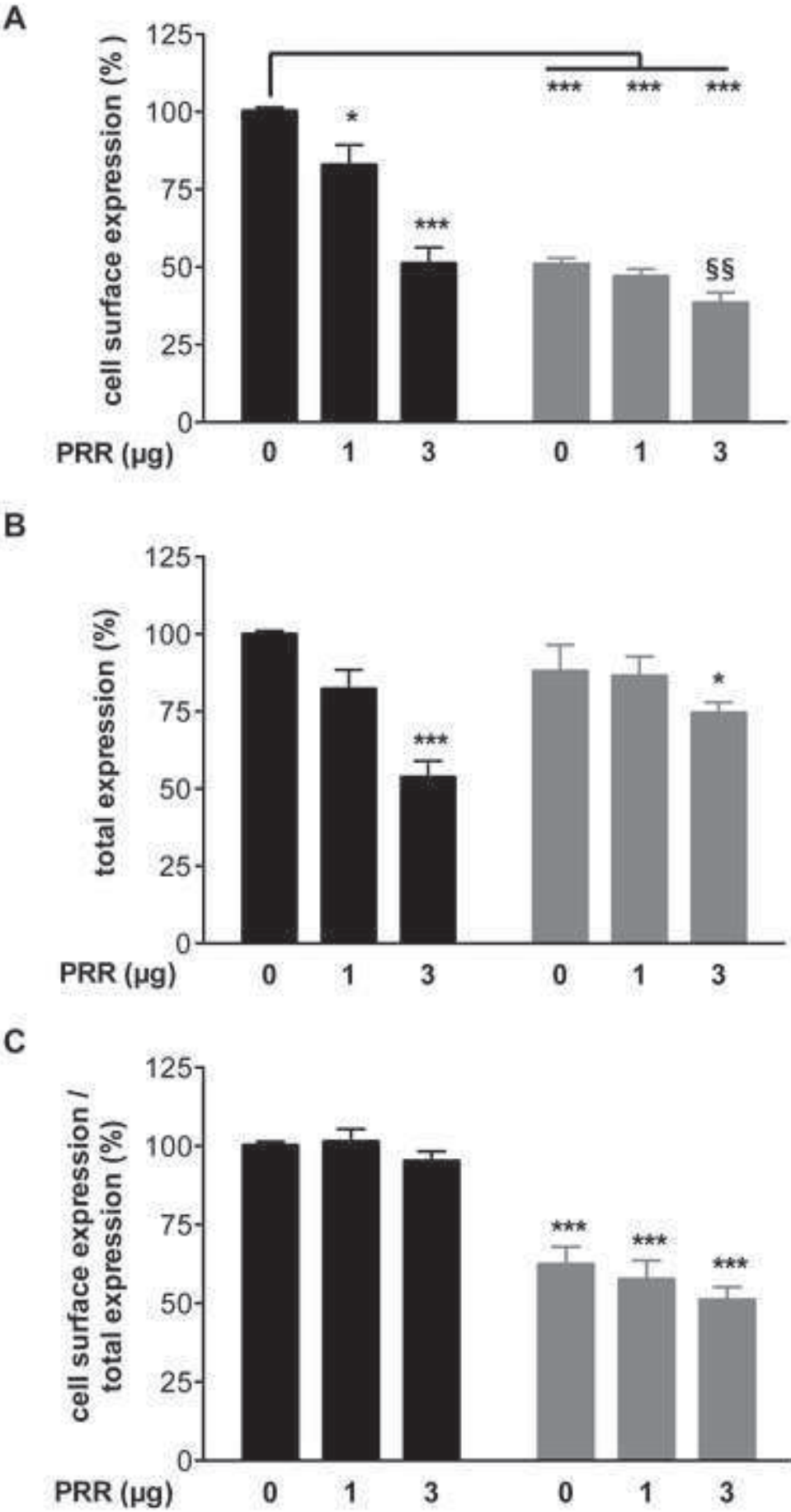


Figure 5  
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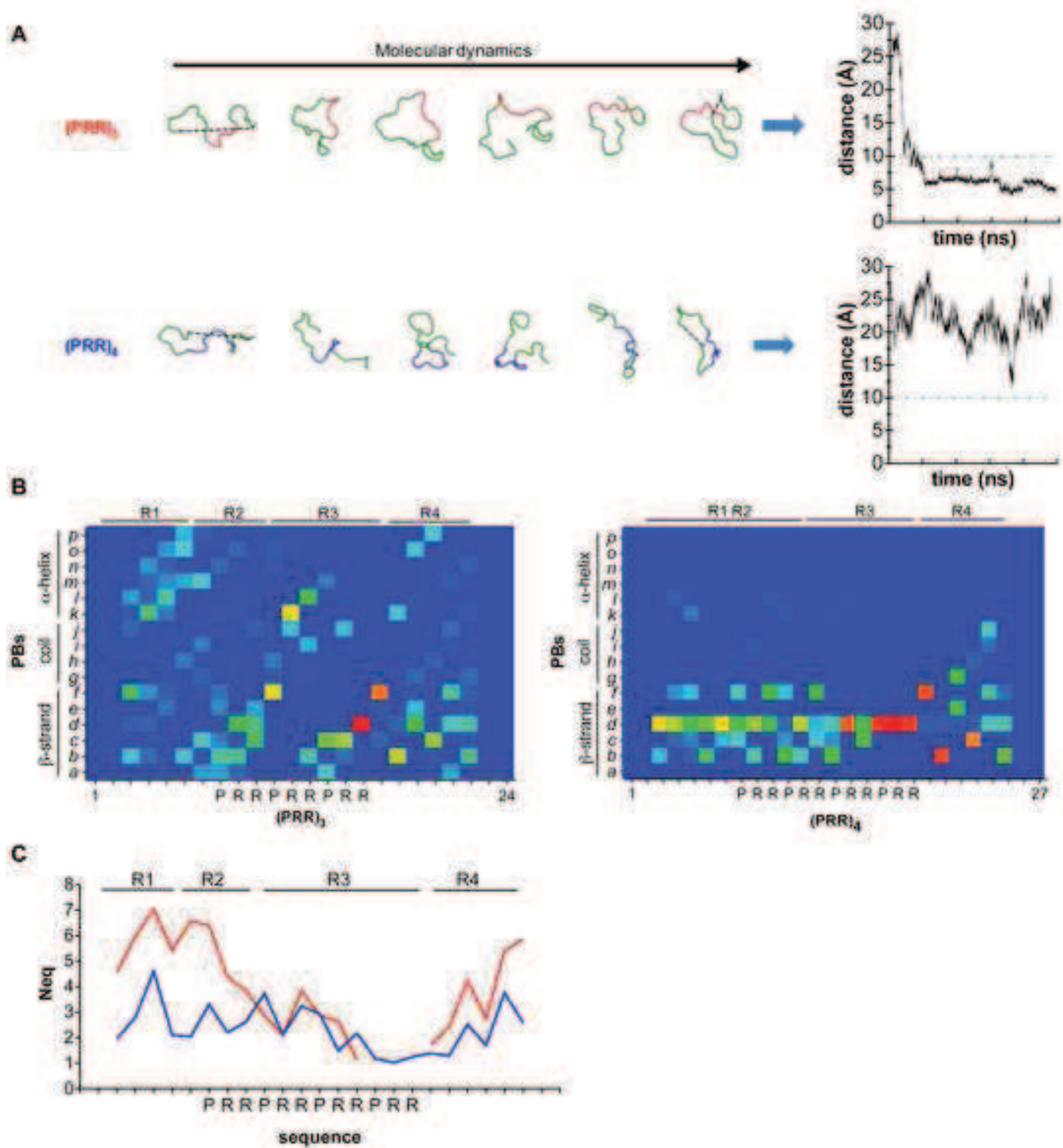


Figure 6  
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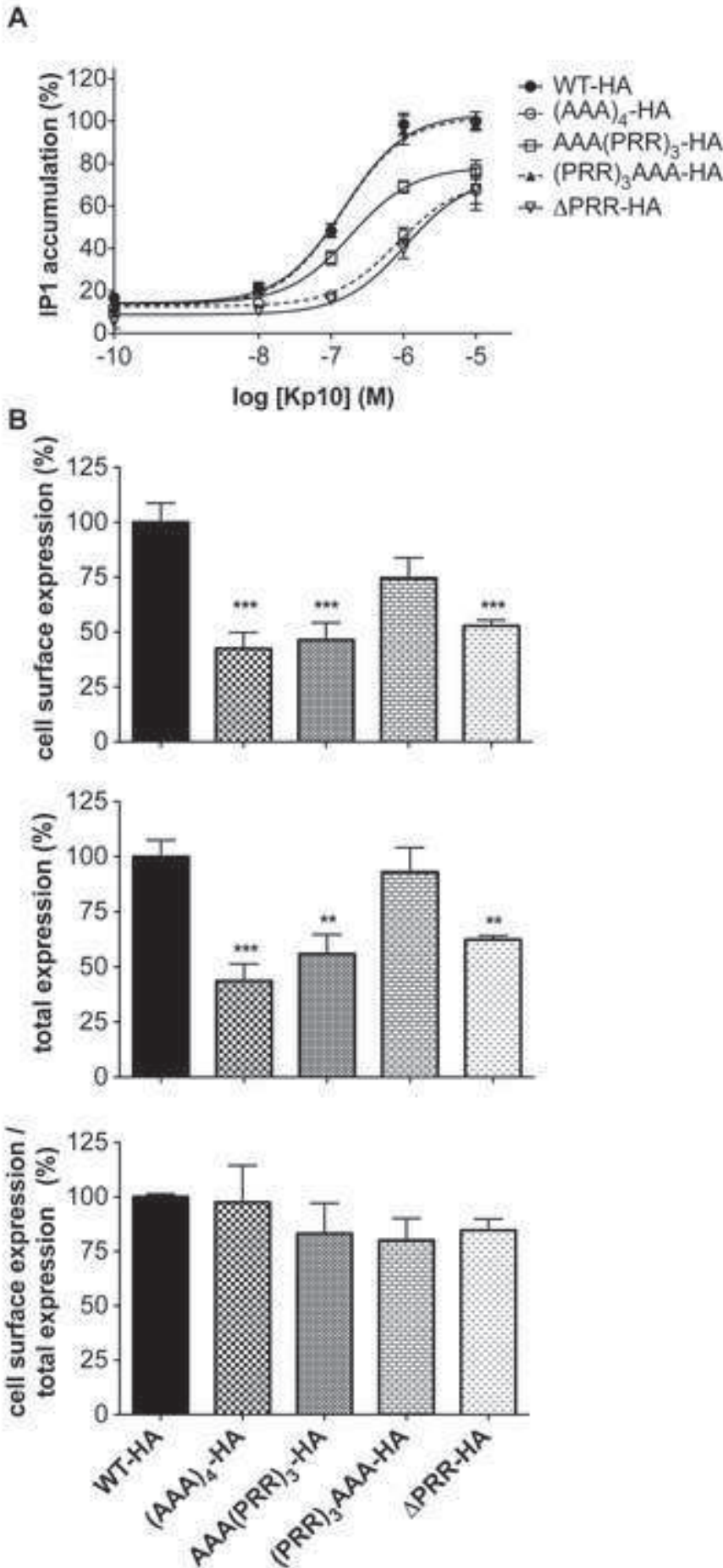


Figure 7  
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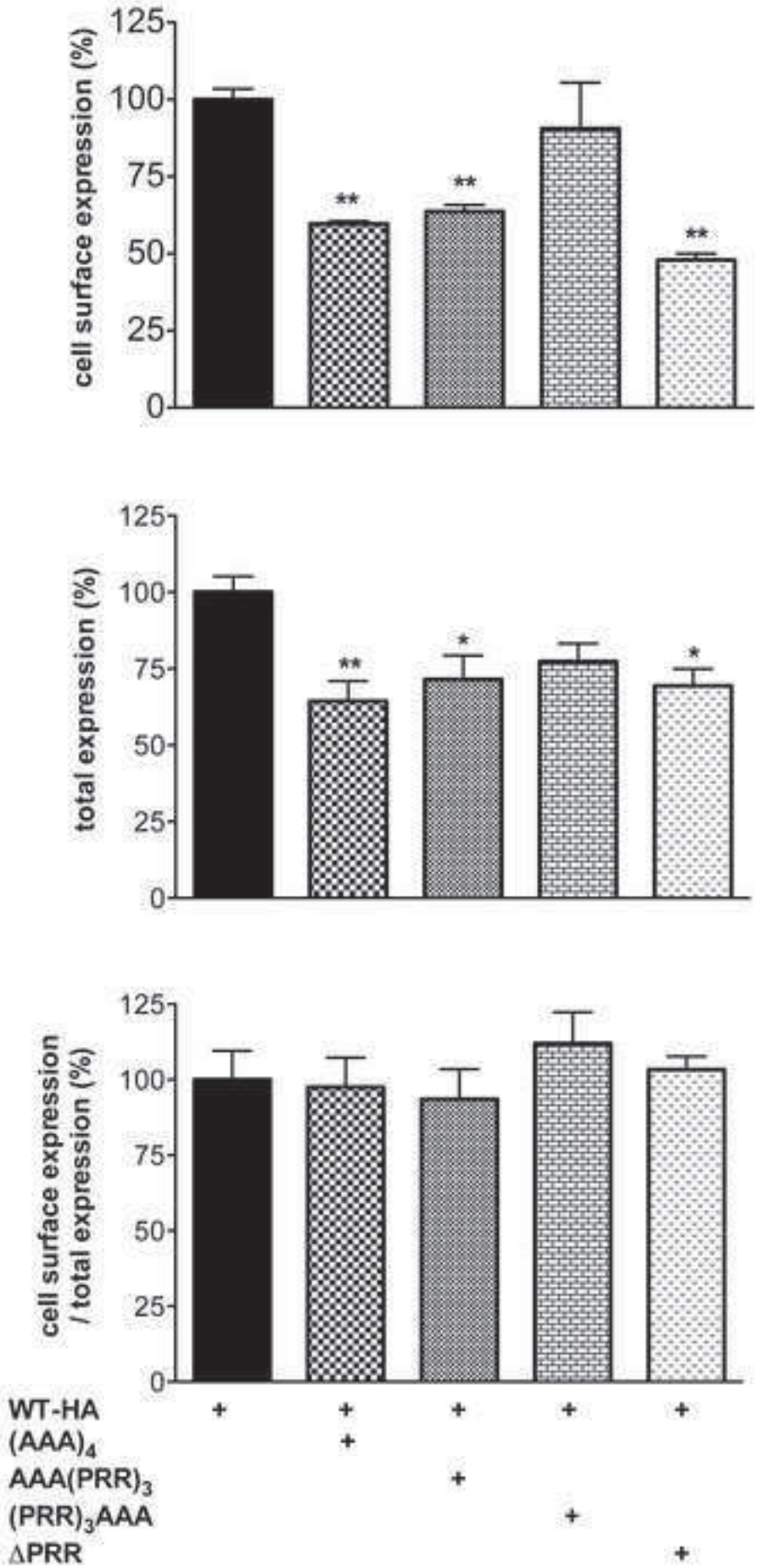


Figure 8

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Homo sapiens	-(PRR) <sub>3</sub>	340	↓ ↓	APRRPRRPRR---P	352
	-(PRR) <sub>4</sub>	340		APRRPRRPRRPRRP	355
	-(PRR) <sub>3</sub> AAA	340		APRRPRRPRRAAAP	355
	- AAA (PRR) <sub>3</sub>	340		AAAAPRRPRRPRRP	355
Macaca falscicularis		340		APRRPRHSRR---P	352
Rattus norvegicus		339		GPQRQRPHAS---	351
Mus musculus		340		CRQRQRPHTS---	352
Sus scrofa		340		ASRRPRRRRWS---	352